

**THE IMPACT OF PARENT ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE  
CLASSES ON CHILDREN'S SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND  
PARENT-SCHOOL INTERACTIONS**

by

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
The University of Utah  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Linguistics

The University of Utah

December 2011

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# The University of Utah Graduate School

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## **ABSTRACT**

Increasing numbers of English Language Learners (ELLs) in the United States (U.S.) public schools, who perform academically below their English speaking counterparts, make it necessary to examine how to best help these children succeed in school. One factor crucial to their academic success is parental support both in and out of school. For parents who do not speak English, or who are limited in their English proficiency, advocating for and supporting their children in public school can be challenging. This study examines English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for parents whose school age children attend the school where the classes are held. It investigates (1) the extent to which the parents feel these ESL classes have helped their children in school, (2) how these classes helped promote interactions between parents and school personnel, and (3) if these interactions were a result of deliberate planning on the part of the ESL teacher or as a byproduct of participation in the ESL course.

Through questionnaires and interviews, this study discovered that Spanish speaking parents in one school reported both (1) improvement in their children's academic performance and their behavior in and out of school and (2) increased parental involvement in the school as a result of ESL classes in which they participated within their children's school. The ESL teachers in this study incorporated activities deliberately to build parental confidence and help parents give support to the children in school. The parents reported that they used these classroom activities as a pattern to advocate for their

children in school. Parents and teachers expressed that even more help of this nature would be beneficial.

For my parents who give me so much support and for  
Colby and Sierra who make life so magical.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my appreciation for the incredible support I have received while working on this thesis. Thank you to my committee, especially my chair, Johanna Watzinger-Tharp, my professors, and my colleagues who have contributed so much to my development as a linguist over the last several years. Several individuals and institutions have contributed to the development of this research: the English Skills Learning Center, the school and school district I worked in, Amber Christensen for Spanish assistance with translation and interviews, Kennan Watt for translation assistance, and Christine Marsh and Rebecca Watt for hours of editing help. My friends and family never lose faith in me and I am so grateful for their support.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This study examines English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for parents whose school age children attend the school where the classes are held. This study investigates (1) the extent to which the parents feel these ESL classes have helped their children in school, (2) how these classes have helped interactions between parents and school personnel, and (3) if these interactions and focus on children's school improvement have been a result of deliberate planning on the part of the ESL teacher.

Parent participants completed a questionnaire that targeted possible links between the ESL classes they took, improvement in their children's performance in school, and increased interaction between parents and school personnel. In semistructured follow-up interviews, parents had an opportunity to give their insight into the connections between the ESL classes and their children's performance and also to give any other information about how they believe these ESL classes have helped the participant and the participant's family. Each individual participant was treated like a case study and the results of the questionnaires and interviews were then analyzed individually and across participants for patterns.

The increasing numbers of English Language Learners (ELLs) in the US public school system and the fact that they are performing lower than English speaking students

make it necessary to examine, from all angles, how best to help these children succeed in school. The parent school relationship is crucial to helping children perform well in school and because parents may have different cultural backgrounds from that of the dominant culture of their children's school environment, they must be given tools to help them assist their children in a new and foreign system.

In this study, the perceptions of the parents indicated that their attendance in ESL classes increased the quality of their children's performances in school. Grades, social behavior and attendance all improved for their children. The number of interactions between parents and teachers and other school personnel also increased.

The second item of interest relating to these classes is whether the increased interaction occurred as a byproduct of the ESL course or as a result of deliberate planning on the part of the ESL teachers to incorporate activities that encouraged this interaction. If there were deliberate planning, did the parents recognize the link between what they were doing in the ESL class and the interactions that should happen in the school with teachers and other personnel? The teacher participants in this study reported that they deliberately planned to incorporate activities, and that parents do recognize the link between what is being taught in ESL parent classes and how parents need to interact with the school and with school personnel to help their children progress.

The study provided additional insight about other ways in which the participants believed that English classes helped in their homes with their children. Parents indicated that the children's behavior improved at home as well as at school, and that they were able to fill the parental role better than they could before as their abilities in English increased. Parents indicated that English was a tool for them to communicate better and

serve in the community more. Improvement in English ability also gave the parents confidence to interact in the school with teachers and other personnel.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Parents Help Students Succeed**

English Language Learners need Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in order to be successful in school in a second language (L2) (Cummins, 1992; 1996). This proficiency takes time to develop and while many students develop Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) quickly, they struggle with CALP. One solution is to place students in a program to develop their academic skills in ESL. ESL classes give students time to develop their language proficiency, but often students who have taken these classes are still not as highly achieving as their English counterparts (Short, 2007). The students who struggle most are often from culturally diverse backgrounds and are overrepresented in the low achieving categories (Cummins, 1996, p. 225; NRCIM, 1998, p. 21). If language classes and time for language development are not enough for students to develop the skills they need to succeed academically in the L2, then they need other types of support. Parental involvement and successful parental interactions at school can accelerate the acquisition of CALP for these students. The backgrounds of ESL students and the relationship to their academic achievement are closely linked; in some cases learners Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) (Cummins, 1996; 1992) can help them process academic concepts more quickly. For

example, literacy skills and concepts in a first language (L1) can be transferred to an L2 with a little bit of additional instruction (Gunderson & Clarke, 1998). If parents recognize that what they do at home and how they do it can help build CUP, then they are better able to help their children succeed in school.

Cummins (1996) claims that educator and student interactions are the most immediate determinant for success or failure in school, including how educators involve parents in the school (p. 21). Other research (outside the scope of this study) that documents ways in which ELL learner's needs are not being met in public schools also supports the need to examine how the needs of the students can be met through multiple means. Linguistic factors are not the sole reason for academic difficulty; failures in interactions between student and educator and parent and educator also contribute to difficulty (Cummins, 1996, p. 76). If a parent does not have a good relationship or positive interactions with the school, then there is no one to teach the child how to interact with educators. Cummins (1996) indicates how important it is for the children to have good interactions in school.

Human relationships are at the heart of schooling. The interactions that take place between students and teachers and among students are more central to students' success than any method for teaching literacy, or science, or math. When powerful relationships are established between teachers and students, these relationships can frequently transcend the economic and social disadvantages that afflict communities. (p. 1)

In addition to difficulties with relationships in school, L2 learners have difficulty in making cognitive connections. These connections can prove particularly difficult for them because their culture and experience may have been ignored or excluded by a teacher, thus causing the student to struggle in school. L2 learners may feel as if everything they have learned up until their time in school has been discarded and has

become irrelevant to school learning. When teachers do not help students make cognitive connections in the classroom and discard past experiences, students are at a disadvantage because they cannot relate the new learning to previous experience (Cummins, 1996).

Culture, including home language, is part of one's identity, and student success is higher when students' cultures are valued and embraced in a school context (Kosonen, 2008).

The home environment is also a critical factor in the success of students in school. "Parents have the clear upper hand when it comes to motivating their children to embrace books and reading" (Graves & Wendorf, 1995, p. 141). Bringing together the school and home efforts is critical to increasing the academic achievement of students in a second language. Baker (2000) explores the interaction of bilingual students and educational systems and the bridge between home and school in a chapter of his book called *The Education of Bilingual Children*.

For many minority language families, the relationship between the school and parents is limited. Some parent teacher relationships are marked by lack of understanding, alienation, and even antagonism between the home and school cultures. Language minority families may be socially and educationally isolated from the school. If parents cannot speak the school language their sense of helplessness and isolation increases. They become reluctant and unable to discuss the progress with the teacher or to attend P-T meetings and school events. While there may be discussion of school problems at home, the issues and worries remain unresolved. Some parents are intimidated by the high status of schools and feel they know best. (pp. 82-83)

Educators and parents need to become partners and work together to help children succeed in school and beyond. Students are empowered if their interactions in school affirm their identities (Cummins, 1996, p. 253). Interaction across cultural and linguistic barriers takes courage for all involved parties and should not alienate parents or children and the culture and language they bring with them to the classroom. For some students, going to school in L2 means making a choice between the culture and language of their

family and the L2; students should not have to make a choice between language maintenance and the preservation of their culture identity and access to upward mobility in the dominant society (Kosonen, 2008). Members of the dominant culture may see a minority language as an obstacle for students to overcome; however, one's home language and cultural identity can be used as tools to assist in acquisition of a new language and culture since the cognitive skills one develops in L1 and culture can often be applied to a new language and environment.

### **Parents and Schools as Valuable Resources for Young Learners**

Cummins (1996) offers suggestions as to how schools can provide an environment that fosters the relationship between home and school. They can welcome members of the community into the classroom, encourage parents to use the home language and help in the classroom, allow parents to tell stories in other languages where students speculate on the meaning based on gestures and pictures, allow children to write in both languages and translate the meaning; sing songs in both languages, act out cross-cultural situations, view media reports in different languages and evaluate differences, and encourage parents to use their native language. These types of classroom activities will help students develop their cultural identity in a safe environment. Although not all of Cummins' suggestions are appropriate in all classrooms such as multicultural and linguistically diverse mainstream classrooms, teachers should consider how to bring these sorts of activities into daily focus.

Schools can utilize what Moll calls funds of knowledge (i.e., knowledge, expertise, and interests that families and individuals in the community have) allowing the



community members to share what they know with the children in school and others in the community (Moll, 1992). Language, cultural knowledge, and community member skills can be valuable assets in the classroom, providing a window into culture and enriching classroom experiences. Including community members in the learning experiences of the children both raises the self-esteem of the children of the minority group and provides important curricular elements as new knowledge is discovered and shared (Baker, 2000).

Becki Cohn-Vargas and Kim Grose (1998) report on how one elementary school in Oakland, California was able to turn around low reading scores. The school involved parents in determining the literacy goals for the school, and together the school and the parents were accountable for achieving them. The foundation for this type of parent-school cooperation had been laid before when the school and community created standards for their partnership. The school formed a leadership team comprised of parents, teachers and administrators to solve the present and future problems in the school.

Richmond Elementary School in Vermont provides yet another model for involving parents in school. They offered parent workshops for elementary school mathematics that taught parents how the math was being taught so that they are better able to help their children at home. Before the workshops, parents felt unable to help their children because they had poor experiences with math in elementary school, they could not remember how to do the math, or they were not familiar with the methods used in the school. After the workshops, parents reported that they felt confident in working with their children and requested an expansion of the workshops to include other subjects

(Whiteford, 1998). Offering workshops like the one at Richmond Elementary School involves parents and gives them the tools to help their children. It is crucial to get the parents into the school; involvement improves parents' attitudes and expectations, as well as learning experiences for their children. (Hatch, 1998).

### **Children as Teachers**

A Maryland elementary school sought to help parents who may not have had personal experiences with technology in school and to understand the importance of such experiences in the lives of their children as they progress in school. The parents may have been resistant to incorporating technology in the classroom because "they were successful without it." In response, the school showcased work that students had done to demonstrate the merits of using technology in the classroom. The event helped parents and community members get on the same page with the teachers, school administrators and district administrators about the importance of technology in the classroom and the merits of developing children's technology skills (Dupont, 1998).

### **The Home Connection**

L1 literacy is known to transfer to an L2. Children who have a home environment that promotes literacy and provides opportunities for developing it become successful readers. "Immersion in a literate environment with extensive exposure to both cognitively challenging talk and text either in home or school (preferably both) is a strong predictor of success in both decoding and reading comprehension" (Cummins, 1996, p. 116). Literacy in an L1 gives students a base of cognitive skills that can be transferred to an L2.

When children lack the foundation of literacy, they fall behind other students in the school who have this literacy base. Children from low-literacy homes can still become proficient readers, but it is better to lower the risks by providing a good home base along with successful instruction (August & Hakuta, 1998). Providing a literacy rich environment in any language helps children develop the skills they need to be successful readers, and contributes to their ability to succeed in school.

Ideally, the school and the home work together to provide the best education possible for children, but parents have a responsibility to provide the building blocks. Much like the background knowledge that students bring to the classroom can facilitate new knowledge, L1s knowledge can also help with learning new concepts in a second language. Cummins (1992) describes how students can transfer knowledge from L1 to L2 because they possess a Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP). A learner's L1 background can facilitate the level of academic achievement in the L2 (Cummins, 1992; Gunderson & Clark, 1998; Kosonen, 2008). A parent can help a child gain academic skills such as phonemic-awareness (the realization that sounds are in contrast) and the ordering of events by reading in the child's L1 so that the child will be able to transfer the concepts to a new language.

Literacy should begin in the home well before a child enters school. Parents and family members provide models for children when they read books, newspapers, and magazines. Parents can also promote literacy development long before school starts by answering children's questions about the print environment or teaching them how to answer their own questions (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001, p. 171). Peregoy and Boyle (2001, p. 155) discuss literacy that children bring with them to school and believes that the same

principles of emergent literacy that govern L1 acquisition are applicable to ELLs. They give some suggestions for how parents can adapt teaching recommendations to the home:

1. Acknowledge that children bring literacy knowledge but vary in sophistication
2. Immerse children in functional reading, an approach to reading that displays purpose and models reading
3. Enrich play areas with functional print
4. Accept and celebrate learner progress in reading development
5. Encourage children to read and talk about reading and writing with them.

They also advise that parents can help their children become better readers by understanding strategies for comprehending text such as predicting the rest of the story and by becoming involved with their children's homework activities that target literacy development (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001, p. 173).

Parents may be hesitant to use the L1 in the home fearing disruption of their child's acquisition of L2. However, building up the L1 skills and proficiency will help the child with acquisition of L2 and other skills. In fact, it has been found that children who are biliterate have cognitive and cultural advantages (Baker, 2000, p. 107). L1 proficiency helps in other ways as well. A conceptual foundation in L1 has been found to be fundamental to developing CALP and more important than L2 conversational fluency and academic skills, and strategies can transfer from an L1 to an L2 (Baker, 2000; Cummins, 1996). Developing and continuing L1 skills can foster the development of those same skills in an L2. Conceptual knowledge in one language helps make the other more comprehensible. Therefore, one may conclude that it is beneficial to promote literacy in both languages so that children can have a two-way transfer of information (Cummins, 1996). The evidence suggests that ideally both the school and the home promote biliteracy, but realistically, the school may not have the resources or desire to

serve the child in the L1. Thus in K-12 contexts in the U.S., parents are instrumental in the development and maintenance of skills in the L1.

In the absence of school programs or community support, parents can organize leadership groups to teach each other how to communicate with the schools. This kind of community interaction can help parents realize that they have something to offer the school, other parents, and their children and that they have the responsibility and right to deal with their children's academic and social concerns (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990).

### **Further Assistance for ESL Parents**

Parents also need an understanding of how the school system works in the U.S. so they can become an advocate for their child in school. How can parents gain access to the training and resources they may need in a foreign environment? Parents need guides who can help them navigate the system and who can give them the information they want or need. Some parents may be motivated to take English classes to improve their own language skills, and thus create avenues of success for themselves and their families. Many ESL classes focus on the development of basic communication skills and building vocabulary so that parents can handle basic daily interactions in English. Simply learning the language will not be enough, however, to navigate the new culture and work within its constraints. Parents need a bridge between what they are learning and how to use that knowledge to help their children. Offering ESL classes for parents within the school environment can be one way to get parents in the doors of the school and help demystify the U.S. school system culture. Inviting parents into the school is a good first step; however, it does not give parents the type of tools they need to truly help their children

succeed. How may parents be given such tools? Some schools and communities have started programs designed to help parents gain better access to the education system. In such programs, parents gain skills needed to advocate for their children and better help their children at home. Such programs help create a stronger home environment for literacy development so that parents are better able to give their children a good start in their education. Guidance received could also help parents learn to interact with the school in meaningful ways such as communicating specific needs with the teacher, understanding behavioral problems a child is having at school, and participating in a child's educational plan. Supportive school programs can therefore assist parents in becoming meaningful contributors to the success of their children in school.

While innovative programs combining language acquisition and resources for helping ESL parents gain better access to the US school system do exist, they are under researched. This research project seeks to understand the effectiveness of such programs by examining a parent ESL program in a public school to determine if parents in the program see a connection between what they are learning in the ESL class on the one hand, and two issues on the other: (1) how they can help their children with academic skills at home and (2) how they can communicate with school personnel at school.

### **Research Questions**

The three research questions address different aspects of interest in this study:

#### **Children's Performance**

1. *Do parents report that their participation in ESL classes has had a positive effect on their children's performance in school? And if so, in what ways?*

### **Parent Interactions in School**

2. *According to the parents, have their interactions with school personnel and teachers improved with the ESL course, and if so, in what ways?*

### **The Link between ESL and School Interactions**

3. *A. Does the ESL teacher deliberately plan to incorporate strategies to increase parental involvement in the school? B. And do the parents recognize the link between these activities and interactions in the school?*

### **Research Approach**

Information considered useful in the design of this qualitative study follow in this section including the research methodology: case studies, semistructured interviews, language of research, and guidelines for analyzing and handling the data.

Answering the research questions and examining the interaction between parent ESL classes and children's performance in school is best approached, at least initially, qualitatively. Experimental and controlled designs cannot answer the questions that educators have. Flick comments on the problem this way, "rapid social change and diversification is giving researchers new social contexts and perspectives. They are so new that traditional deductive methodologies are failing for differentiation" (2002, p. 2). This is certainly true in U.S. school system where the dynamics of student backgrounds are changing so rapidly. Flick (2002) also states that "knowledge and practice can be studied as local knowledge and local practice" (p. 2). "Qualitative researchers are concerned with measurable facts, but also the ways that people construct, interpret and give meaning to these experiences" (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002, p. 199). This study not

only examines if parents report an increase in the children's performance in school and parent interaction with school personnel, but also seeks to identify reasons parents believe they are increasing. The study examines a process that is happening right now and not something that happened and is finished, so the research methods used examine those processes in development as stated by Gerson and Horowitz, "qualitative approaches typically include attention to dynamic processes rather than static categories" (2002, p. 199) and can give understanding "from the interior using case studies as a starting point" (Flick, 2002, p. 25).

Qualitative research methodologies seek to answer different research questions from quantitative methodologies. Qualitative methodologies can help in understanding how social processes create official figures. In the case of this study, the methodologies used can help understand how ESL classes impact more than just the participants in those classes and seeks to understand what exactly is causing the changes. Qualitative research can make visible and unpick the mechanism which links particular variables by looking at accounts or explanations provided by those involved. Qualitative research can provide a fuller picture of how the macro (social class position, gender, etc.) is translated into the micro (everyday practices, interactions, and understandings) to guide individual behavior. (Barbour, 2008, p. 11)

The research should be conducted in a setting where policies formed from the research will impact a similar setting. A case study, "which is a comprehensive research strategy" (Yin, 2003, p. 14) in an educational setting, is "good to inform policy for those same settings," according to Bassey (1999, p. 58). This study is aimed at informing policy and seeks to determine if what is happening in an ESL class for parents has positive effects on the academic performance and social behavior for the children of the parents. In turn this information can help policy makers in similar educational settings. Bassey (1999) states that

an educational case study is an empirical enquiry which is: conducted within a localized boundary of space and time; into interesting aspects of an educational



programme; mainly in its natural context; in order to inform judgments and decisions, so that the data can be used to explore significant features of the case and create plausible interpretations of what is found. (p. 58)

Yin (2003) gives a definition of a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (p. 13).

Bassey (1999) discussed the importance of keeping research in a ‘localized boundary’ (p. 58) in order “to explore significant features of the case and create possible interpretations.” Therefore, a chosen data method must locate and utilize the data that properly assess that which we are seeking to know. This study uses questionnaires and interviews designed to provide information for building the case study.

One on one interviews are perhaps the most commonly used method of qualitative research. Most qualitative researchers favor the semistructured interview which allows for ordering of questions with some flexibility to take into account those items important to the interviewee. (Barbour, 2008, p. 17)

Flick (2002) provides a guide for designing interview questions: Semi structured questions bring the interview to the level of specificity needed. If the questions are too open, then the subjects can discuss whatever they want and the researcher may not get the desired data. Questions should be formed in such a way that the researcher can guide the interviewee to the topic but also leaves the interview open for the participant to be able to openly express what they feel is most important on the topic. The interviewer has the responsibility to have the questions meet the range necessary to cover the important topics and the depth necessary to understand the topic, but also it needs to be personal so that the interviewee can bring in the information they want to on the subject. For these reasons, interview questions in this study were used to guide the interviews. The importance of individual interviews can be ascertained from the statements that follow. “Individual interviews provide the opportunity to examine how large scale

transformations are experienced, interpreted, and shaped by responses. Puzzles about macro social trends can be solved by examining micro social process as they unfold in lives of individuals” (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002, p. 201). Furthermore, “qualitative research questions the processes and beliefs; it excels at illuminating context and process as a route for explaining actions. It is an iterative approach that can evolve as it unfolds” (Barbour, 2008, p. 31), thus leaving room for one to follow where the research leads within the range of responses and the data collected in a particular study. Also, preparations for such an interview is of value; it is often more efficient to collect some data from a short questionnaire before conducting an interview (Barbour 2008). Through the use of a short questionnaire a researcher can discover what types of questions to ask and also assess which areas may be of interest. Then, in the interview, the interviewer elicits “accounts from people about the topic with room for them to select which aspects they wish to emphasize” (Barbour, 2008, p. 119). Additionally, Boeije (2010) recommends “grouping questions together in blocks so that it helps the participants as you go through the questions” (p. 67). In this study, the questions ask first about the children’s performance, then about the parent’s interactions with teachers or school personnel.

Some of the guidelines used in determining specific research methodology for this project follow. (1) *Use of case studies*: if “case studies can provide an opportunity to bridge the gap between the details in pre-existing records and can give information that other methods cannot” (Barbour, 2008, p. 19), then the researcher selects cases to “make instructive comparisons.” The participants and children in this study are similar to other immigrant families in the area. “Cases can be chosen for typicality then the researcher

can speculate as to the transferability or generalizability of the study's findings."

(Barbour, 2008, p. 19) (2) *Selecting participants for the study*: according to Gerson and Horowitz (2002, p. 204), "the goal is to choose a group of respondents who are strategically located to shed light on the larger forces and process under investigation." Furthermore, from Yin (2003) multiple cases are used to see similarities or replication in results, or to identify unique insights. (3) *More specific requirements*: In the case of the research questions in this study, the participants needed to be parents of children in public school and should be beginning English language learners to give their experiences and unique perspectives into this world and how their experiences relate to the larger issues at hand. Also, Flick suggests that some variation should be restricted by determining some of the sample ahead of time. (Flick, 2002) (4) *Facilitating communication*: Liamputtong (2010) discusses the importance of using the language of the participants when conducting research across cultures and languages so that the participants feel comfortable expressing themselves. In the localized educational settings that are under examination, Spanish speaking participants in one school were chosen to participate in the study (since the dominant minority language is Spanish).

Guidelines used in working with the data follow. (1) *Recording and storing data*: While conducting the interviews and gathering the responses to the questionnaires, the data should be "recorded and stored so that it can easily be retrieved" (Boeje, 2010, p. 72) and raw data should be changed into a form that can be easily worked with. (2) *Organizing data*: Each interview and data set should be "subjected to close scrutiny and also compared to the others so that a set of categories can emerge" (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002, p. 217). "The constant comparative method, comparing and contrasting the

qualitative data looks at the data systematically to see how patterns emerge. Examining the occurrence of particular perspectives within the groups can be instructive” (Barbour, 2008, pp. 217-218). (3) *Analyzing from multiple perspectives*: Using multiple sources for data including multiple interviews, multiple data collection methods (questionnaires and interviews), and theoretical background allows for “triangulation of the data” (Yin, 2003, p. 47). Triangulation looks at the same incident or research questions through many different means and having multiple perspectives gives a clearer picture and more support to the data analysis and interpretations. This study is looking at the issues involved through research, semistructured interviews and questionnaires. Multiple participants are used to see if the data are consistent across participants.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **FINDINGS**

This chapter contains all of the findings from this research study and is organized in the following manner:

1. An introduction to the study giving background information and an overview of the research project.
2. A description of the subjects who participated in the study and how they were selected.
3. Information about the materials used to collect and store data and how the methods used relate to the research questions.
4. The exact procedures used to conduct the study
5. The results of the study and information gathered from the participants.

The results section is organized by research question. Each research question is given and then the questions from questionnaires are discussed. Questionnaire questions are presented with responses from each participant and a description of those responses.

Information from follow-up interviews is presented after the results from questionnaires and is compiled for each research question.

## **Introduction**

This study examines the connection between parents attending ESL classes in the school their children attend, and the extent to which they consider these classes to have had an impact on their ability to help their children in school. It also looks at the interaction between the classes the parents are attending and how these classes may have changed the pattern of interaction with teachers and other school personnel in the school.

In Salt Lake City, the English Skills Learning Center (ESLC) provides ELLs with a variety of English services. Through one program, called “Empowering Parents,” parents come to their child’s school for English classes. The goals of this program are to help parents become more active in their children’s education and understand parts of the school system. The research study used participants (i.e., teachers and parents) from this program to evaluate how effective this type of a program can be for parents and if parents perceive that it does in fact help children’s performance in school and the parent interactions with the school.

The ESL teachers are volunteers who are trained and supervised by the ESLC. Built into their training is the notion that these classes are to help the parents become more involved in their child’s schooling. This research study evaluates the planning on the part of the teacher and if the parents recognize this deliberate planning as beneficial to the parent in their interactions with the school.

## **Subjects**

The school in which this study was conducted has had a parent program in place for a few years. Eighty-eight percent of the students in the school are ELLs with 30

languages represented. The school has many community programs for the parents including ESL classes.

Two ESL classes for the parents were used. One class meets during school hours for 1 hour 2 days per week, and the other class meets in the evening for 1 hour 2 days per week. The evening class has two teachers and the morning class has one teacher. The attendance in these classes fluctuates and the English proficiency level of the students is varied. However, no one in these classes is above a beginning level.

Two groups participated in the study: (1) the volunteer teachers of the ESL programs for parents and (2) the parents themselves. The parent participants are adult ELLs in English classes in the school attended by their children, nieces and nephews, or grandchildren. While the adult English classes may have participants from many language backgrounds, for this study native Spanish speakers (nine female, one male) were selected so that the interviews could be conducted in the language of the participants. The participants' ages ranged from about 30-60 years, and their years of English instruction varied from 2 months to 2 years. The countries of origin include Mexico and Guatemala.

All parent participants have children, or other family members for whom they have some responsibility, attending the elementary school where the adult ESL classes take place. Seven participants attend the daytime class that occurs during school hours and three participants attend the evening class after school hours. Demographic breakdown for the participants is illustrated in Table 1.

The ESL teachers are volunteers who are trained and supervised by the ESLC. Often volunteers begin as tutors. As they gain more experience, they then teach a class.

Table 1. Participant Information

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Children in School</b>	<b>Time Spent Learning English</b>	<b>Gender</b>
A	Mexico	3 children - boys	5 months	Female
B	Mexico		2 years	Female
C	Guatemala	1 child	2 months	Female
D	Mexico		6 months	Female
E		3 children	6 months	Female
F	Mexico City	3 grandchildren	2 months	Male
G	Mexico		2 years	Female
H	Mexico			Female
I	Mexico City		2 months	Female
J	Mexico	2 nephews	2 months	Female

The teachers participating in the study represent other volunteer teachers in similar school ESL programs for parents who have had some training specifically geared toward working with parents whose children are in public school.

### **Materials**

Through a questionnaire the researcher collected background information and also information pertaining to the parents' perceptions about how the ESL classes may or may not have helped their children. All questionnaire participants were invited to be interviewed, though only some actually participated (as explained in above). For those who did participate, semistructured interview questions were used to gain more insight into the perceived relationships. The interviews were recorded digitally so that they could be analyzed at a later time.

The questions on the parent questionnaire relate to Research Questions 1 and 2. The questions on the teacher participant questionnaire are designed to answer research question one.



More specifically, the research questions relate to the questionnaire questions as follows:

Research Question #1 *Do parents report that their participation in ESL classes has had a positive effect on their children's performance in school? And if so, in what ways?*

Parent Questionnaire (English Appendix A, Spanish Appendix B) #2, 3

Parent Follow-up Questions (English Appendix C, Spanish Appendix D) #1, 2

Research Question #2 *According to the parents, have their interactions with school personnel and teachers improved with the ESL course, and if so, in what ways?*

Parent Questionnaire #2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10

Parent Follow-up Questions #3

Research Question #3 A. *Does the ESL teacher deliberately plan to incorporate strategies to increase parental involvement in the school?*

Teacher Questionnaire (Appendix E) # 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

B. *And do the parents recognize the link between these activities and interactions in the school?*

Parent Questionnaire #6, 10

Parent Follow-up Questions #1, 3

### **Procedures**

I went to the ESL classes, asked students in the ESL classes if they were willing to participate in a short research project, and read a paragraph in Spanish that told them why this research was being conducted, why their answers were important, and how they

would be used. All students in the class were welcome to participate, but there was no compensation or incentive given to participate. Spanish speaking parents were offered the questionnaire and consent letter in Spanish and other parents in the ESL class had the opportunity to answer the questions in English. All of the Spanish speakers who were present in the class decided to participate in the study by answering the questions on the questionnaire. None of the non-Spanish speaking parents were able to complete the questionnaire in English because their English ability was too low to understand the wording in the consent letter and questionnaire. All information was presented to the Spanish speaking parents in Spanish with a translator and the researcher was on hand to answer any questions that came up. For example, one parent had trouble understanding what school interaction meant for her as a parent. Did it mean her interactions or her children's interactions?

The students then received the questionnaires with a consent letter, both in Spanish. The participants answered questions about their experiences in the class through a questionnaire. There was a Spanish speaker on hand to help the students record their answers if they wanted to participate but had low reading skills in Spanish. The Spanish speaker was also able to answer in the native language any questions that the participants had about the study. The questionnaires were completed during their regularly scheduled English classes. The teacher was present to help the students feel comfortable with the additional of the outsiders and reassured the students that it was okay for them to answer the questions honestly.

After the questionnaires were collected, they were evaluated to see how the questions were answered. If the participant answered the questions and/or commented on

how the ESL class could help them, then those were the participants desired for follow-up interviews. However, when the researcher returned to do the follow-up interviews, not all of those who had completed questionnaires were present at the ESL class on either day that the interviews were conducted. As a result, three participants from the evening class completed questionnaires but only two returned for follow-up interviews. These two participants completed follow-up interviews. Seven parent participants from the daytime class completed the questionnaire and then four participants completed follow-up interviews. The participants were given additional information in Spanish about what would be asked in the interviews and then were given an opportunity to either participate in the follow-up interviews or decline participation. All participants who completed questionnaires who were present on the follow-up days did choose to participate in follow-up interviews. The follow-up interviews were conducted in the same room as the regular ESL class, but in a private corner so that others could not hear the interview. A translator was used to ask all of the questions in Spanish and the interviews were recorded. I am not a fluent Spanish speaker, but understood enough to ask some additional clarification questions in English for the translator to ask the participant in Spanish during the interview. I was also available to answer any questions (through the interpreter) that the participants had about the wording of the questions and most often about whether the questions were about their children or themselves as students. The participants were informed verbally again about the consent procedures they signed and verbal confirmation that it was okay to conduct and interview was obtained.

An interpreter was used to conduct all of the interviews with the participants so that they could freely express themselves in a language they felt comfortable using. The

participants were assigned a letter to identify them as separate but anonymous participants and from that point on only letters were used to identify the participants. All of the follow-up interviews were recorded on a small tape recorder and saved to MP3 files in *Audacity*.

Two of the volunteer ESL teachers also completed questionnaires with open-ended questions to give their perceptions and experiences in the ESL classes and these participants were also assigned letters to protect their identities and for identification purposes.

## **Results**

In the questionnaire, participants could select multiple choices for many of the questions. The percentages listed are the number of participants out of 10 who selected a specific response. The letters represent actual participants and their responses. Complete data from the parent questionnaire are found in Appendix F, from parent follow-up interviews in Appendix G, and from the teacher questionnaire in Appendix H. Below are the data from the interviews and questionnaires organized by research question.

**Research Question #1: Do parents report that their participation in ESL classes has had a positive effect on their children's performance in school? And if so, in what ways?**

Parents report that attending ESL classes has had a positive effect on their children's performance in school. According to the parents, the ESL classes enabled them

to be more actively involved in parenting again. They help with homework and know what is happening at school, and they rely less on others for support as their English skills improve. The student's behavior, grades, and attendance have all improved.

#### Parent Question #2

Question	<b>This class has helped me _____ (Circle all that apply)</b>			
Selections	Help my children at home with homework	In the workplace	Know how to interact at my child's school with teachers and other staff	Understand the school system in the US
Participants (number)	A,C,D,E,F,G,H,I (8)	I,J (2)	C,D,E (3)	D,E,F,I (4)

In Question #2 on the parent questionnaire, eight answered that taking ESL classes has helped them to help their children with homework; four reported that the classes have helped them to understand the school system in the US. Understanding the US school system can help the parents increase their relationship with the school and is one way that the school can help to foster the relationship between home and school. This improved understanding helps them to become advocates for their children.

#### Parent Question #3

Question	<b>Since I have been attending ESL classes in my child's school, I have seen improvements in my child in the following areas: (circle all that apply)</b>				
Selections	My child's grades have improved	My child's behavior at school has improved	My child's attendance has improved	My child's relationship with his teacher has improved	I have not seen any improvement
Participants (number)	A,D,G,J (4)	B,C,D,G (4)	D,H,J (3)	D,E,F,I (4)	(0)

In Question #3, the participants indicated the improvement at school that they have observed in their children since beginning the ESL classes. Four of the parents marked that their children's grades had improved; four indicated that their children's behavior at school had improved; three marked that their children's attendance had improved, and four marked that their children's relationship with the teacher had improved. No participant marked that no improvement had been seen.

Follow-up questions were asked of six participants; the responses give examples of how participants felt these classes have helped their children in school. The first follow-up question asked: Tell me how the ESL course has helped you to help your child in school and in what ways is your child doing better in school since you have been taking ESL classes?

The participants' responses indicate a strong connection between home and school. Participants A, E, F, I, and J all said in interview that the ESL classes have helped them to help their children (or relatives) with their homework, which was something they could not have done previously. Participant A indicated that her child won the student of the month award because of her help and participant E said that she previously had to ask a neighbor or someone else to help her children, but she was now able to help them herself. Participant F was happy that she could now help her children in the moment instead of having them wait until the next day to receive help from the teacher. Participant J now knows if her nieces and nephews are doing tricks or bad things because she can understand what they are doing and discuss it with the teacher.

The parents (or caregivers) have all increased their English skills to the point that they are now able to assist their children with homework. They report that their children's

grades and behavior at school have improved as a direct result of the English that they are learning in their ESL class.

**Research Question #2: Do parents feel that their interactions with school personnel and teachers have improved since beginning the ESL course and if so, in what ways?**

Parents reported their interactions with teachers and school personnel have increased since beginning ESL classes. They attribute this to learning the language and behavior expected of the children in school. Interaction with the school has increased through attendance at parent teacher conferences and other meetings, and through telephone contact.

**Parent Question #2**

Question	This class has helped me _____ (Circle all that apply)			
Selections	Help my children at home with homework	In the workplace	Know how to interact at my child's school with teachers and other staff	Understand the school system in the US
Participants (number)	A,C,D,E,F,G,H,I (8)	I,J (2)	C,D,E (3)	D,E,F,I (4)

In Question #2, some choices relate to research Question #1, but two choices relate to research Question #2. Three of the participants indicated that the class helped them know how to interact with their children's teachers and staff at school and four participants indicated that the ESL classes helped them better understand the U.S. school

system. It is important for parents to understand the culture of the school; the better the home environment and school connection, the better the children perform in school.

#### Parent Question #4

Question	<b>This year I have interacted with my child's teacher (circle all that apply)</b>			
Selections	On the phone	At parent teacher conference	Another time to discuss my child's performance	I have not interacted with my child's teacher
Participants (number)	D (1)	B,C,D,E,F,G,H (7)	A,D,H,J (4)	(0)

In Question #4, all but one parent indicated that they have interacted with their children's teachers since beginning ESL classes. These interactions occurred over the phone or in person with seven of the participants reporting that they attended parent teacher conferences. Most of the teachers do not speak Spanish; the parents would have been required to speak English to communicate with them or would have needed a translator.

#### Parent Question #5

Question	<b>Has your interaction with your child's teacher increased since attending this ESL class? (choose one)</b>	
Selections	YES	NO
Participants (number)	A,B,C,D,E,G,I,J (8)	(0)

Question #5 shows increased English ability for these participants (eight) also increased interaction with the teacher.



## Parent Question #6

Question	<b>If yes to #5, how has this course helped you to do that better? (circle all that apply)</b>		
Selections	By practicing dialogs between parent and teacher	By learning language to describe things I want to discuss	By understanding what is expected of me as the parent in a US public school
Participants (number)	D,E,G,I (4)	A,B,C,D,E,I (6)	D,E,I (3)

Question #6 indicates some ways in which the ESL class has supported parents increasing their interactions with teachers. Dialog practice (four), school language (seven), and understanding school expectations (three) gave parents the confidence and tools necessary to meet with their children's teachers.

## Parent Question #8

Question	<b>This year I have interacted with the school personnel in my child's school (circle all that apply)</b>			
Selections	By phone to say that my child will be missing school	In person to take them out of school	Another time to discuss my child's behavior	I have not interacted with school personnel
Participants (number)	A,B,D,F,G,J (6)	H (1)	B,C,E (3)	E (1)

All but one of the parents has interacted with the school personnel (1) by phone to say their child will be missing school, (2) in person to take their child out of school, or (3) at another time to discuss the child's behavior.

## Parent Question #9

Question	<b>Has your interaction with your child's school personnel increased since attending this ESL class? (choose one)</b>	
Selections	YES	NO
Participants (number)	A,D,E,F,G,I,J (7)	B,C (2)

Seven parents indicated in Question # 9 that their interaction with school personnel has increased since beginning the ESL classes.

## Parent Question #10

Question	<b>If yes to #9, how has this course helped you to do that better? (circle all that apply)</b>		
Selections	By practicing dialogs for things like calling the school when my child is sick	By learning language to describe what I wanted to discuss	By understanding what is expected of me as the parent in a US public school
Participants (number)	A,D,I,J (4)	E,F,I,J (4)	E,F (2)

The increase in interaction is a result of dialog practice (four), academic language (four), and school expectations (two).

When parents were asked to tell how this ESL class had helped increase their interactions in the school, they overwhelmingly attributed it to their increased English ability; they can now communicate with the teachers to ascertain what is going on with their children. One parent said that she now can meet face to face with the teacher; before, they had used notes to communicate. One parent reported that she can now use

English with the teachers and has weekly meetings about her student's progress in school. The responses indicate increased confidence in asking questions about their children.

The parents all indicated that their interactions with teachers and others have increased since attending the ESL class. Activities in the class have given them the knowledge and confidence to go into the school and advocate for their children. Any ESL classes could provide practice in these same skills, but a class held within the child's school removes the barrier to entering the school. It helps put the school and the parents on the same team, uniting their efforts. The parents understand school expectations and are able to communicate their needs and desires to the teacher.

**Research Question #3a: Does the ESL teacher deliberately plan to incorporate strategies to increase parental involvement in the school?**

If parents go into the school more because of increased confidence in their abilities, then this should become part of the curriculum design when working with ESL parents of school age children. Research Question 3 explores (a) whether the teachers plan this into the class and (b) whether or not the parents recognize the link and application of what they are learning.

The two volunteer English teachers were given a questionnaire (Appendix E) with open ended questions. The responses indicate that they do, in some cases, deliberately incorporate strategies to increase parental involvement in the school. Both teachers indicated that practice is used in their classes to help parents become familiar with methods of interaction with school personnel. Teacher A practices parent teacher

conferences as well as stories and dialogues that deal with various themes such as what to do if your child is sick, or what to do about bullying. Teacher B said that in the units about school and family she sometimes talks about teachers and school.

The teachers were asked if they use ESL class time to discuss the progress of the children in school, since the parents need to learn how to talk about this subject in English to communicate with teachers. Teacher A said that she does discuss this in the ESL classes but not often. If a parent wants to discuss an issue, she is open to doing that in class. Teacher B said that she would like to know how to lead discussions like this because she thinks an open forum for discussions of problems would be helpful, but she does not currently do it.

**Research Question #3b: Do the parents recognize the link between these activities and interactions in the school?**

Parents recognize the link between what is happening in the ESL classroom and how it can help them in interactions with their children's teachers. This was evident in answers (discussed above) for Questions #5 and #6 on the parent questionnaire.

**Parent Question #5**

Question	<b>Has your interaction with your child's teacher increased since attending this ESL class? (choose one)</b>	
Selections	YES	NO
Participants (number)	A,B,C,D,E,G,I,J (8)	(0)

## Parent Question #6

Question	<b>If yes to #5, how has this course helped you to do that better? (circle all that apply)</b>		
Selections	By practicing dialogs between parent and teacher	By learning language to describe things I want to discuss	By understanding what is expected of me as the parent in a US public school
Participants (number)	D,E,G,I (4)	A,B,C,D,E,I (6)	D,E,I (3)

The parents indicated which activities in class (dialogs and knowledge) have helped them to work more with the teacher.

## Parent Question #9

Question	<b>Has your interaction with your child's school personnel increased since attending this ESL class? (choose one)</b>	
Selections	YES	NO
Participants (number)	A,D,E,F,G,I,J (7)	B,C (2)

## Parent Question #10

Question	<b>If yes to #9, how has this course helped you to do that better? (circle all that apply)</b>		
Selections	By practicing dialogs for things like calling the school when my child is sick	By learning language to describe what I wanted to discuss	By understanding what is expected of me as the parent in a US public school
Participants (number)	A,D,I,J (4)	E,F,I,J (4)	E,F (2)

The same is true for interaction with school personnel. The parents reported that through the ESL classes, they have become more involved and interactive.

The teachers reported that the parents are studying English to help their children and the teachers recognize some ways they can help the parents accomplish this. If the parents in these classes, where teachers sometimes incorporate activities and sometimes are not sure how to do that, have increased their ability to help their children in school and advocate for them, then it is reasonable to assume that parents could mostly likely do much more for their children if the teachers had more strategies available to them and were mindful of how to increase those interactions. The course is succeeding in increasing the parents' abilities to do more for their children, but the teachers indicate that there is still room for improvement and this could benefit the children even more.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **DISCUSSION**

This study reveals that parent ESL classes benefit:

1. the parents who learn English
2. teachers who need to communicate information about the child
3. the school personnel, and
4. the school children who need a parent advocate and other parental support

Children profit in many ways from strong parental support. Parents want children to succeed, but may lack some of the tools to accomplish this goal. Parent ESL classes such as those discussed in this study can be of key importance in helping parents reach their goals. Through such exposure, parents are able to share not only their culture of origin, but also the culture of their new environment and how to function in it.

The study posed three questions. Each question is listed followed by a description of how it was answered.

- 1. Do parents report that their participation in ESL classes has had a positive effect on their children's performance in school? And if so, in what ways?*

The parents reported that there was a positive relationship between attending ESL and their children's performance in school. Improvement in the children's grades, attendance and behavior were perceived as results of parents attending the ESL classes.

Parents attributed this improvement to an increase in their own English language ability. This increase meant that they no longer relied on others to help their children with homework and other school related tasks. Learning English gave them the tools to help their children succeed.

2. *According to the parents, have their interactions with school personnel and teachers improved with the ESL course, and if so, in what ways?*

Interactions with both the teachers and other school personnel increased as a result of parent ESL classes in their child's school. Parents developed confidence in using English as they met with teachers and interacted with other staff. They no longer had to rely on others to communicate their needs and desires. The ESL classes contributed directly to this by giving parents tools and assisting them in developing strategies to facilitate successful interactions.

3. *A. Does the ESL teacher deliberately plan to incorporate strategies to increase parental involvement in the school? B. And do the parents recognize the link between these activities and interactions in the school?*

Teachers in the study deliberately planned activities to increase parental involvement in the school. They conducted activities designed to increase parental confidence levels and help them understand the cultural significance of their involvement. The parents made connections between what had happened in the ESL classroom and the happenings in their children's schools and they were able to use the things that they had learned and practiced in the classroom to advocate for their children.

Many connections between home and school have been made in the ESL classes and at the school studied. Parents have become more involved in their children's school,



and, as the research shows, parental involvement is one key factor to children's success in school. These classes have been successful in tearing down the barriers for parents previously afraid to enter the school. For these parents, the ESL classes have established strategies and given them tools they can continue to use as they support and advocate for their children.

However, there are still areas in which these classes could do more. Both teachers and parents indicated that more could be done to support the parents. Parents suggested that more education about what is expected in school, more practice with activities to build their confidence, and more vocabulary development would be useful. Teachers indicated a need for ideas on how to incorporate more activities. They also expressed a need to spend more time on activities that give parents the support they desire.

### **Parent Motivation for Involvement**

Participants in this study became involved in English classes for many different reasons: to improve English skills, to get a better job, to help their child in school, to get to know other parents in the school, and to help in the community. However, more than half of the participants were taking these ESL classes in part to help their children perform better in school. ESL classes can give parents tools to help their children succeed if the classes are structured with this goal in mind and if the classes provide support for parents.

This study suggests that home environment plays a critical role in the success of students. The parents in this study indicated that the ESL classes did have a positive impact on their children's performance in school. Participating in ESL classes at their

children's school may have improved parent's confidence using English and allows parents to regain their parental role and become more involved in their children's schooling. The ESL classes gave parents tools to help their children with homework without relying on other people. This helped preserve parent-child relationships in the home and helped children perform better in school.

### **The Home Connection**

What happens in the home is an important factor in determining what happens in school (Baker, 2000); both home and school should work together for the success of the child. Not everything that happens at home is directly related to school, but a good environment in the home is a factor in academic success. During the follow-up interviews with the parents, a few of them discussed the behavior of their children at home. Four parents reported that their children's behavior at school had improved since they had started ESL classes, and in the follow-up interviews, four other parents reported that their increased proficiency in English had contributed to their children doing better at home. The participants attributed this improved behavior to their ability to reclaim their roles as parents. They could now understand when their children were misbehaving in English because their children were no longer able to hide what they were doing by using the language that the parent did not understand. One participant indicated that his improvement in English proficiency has helped all of the individuals in the home communicate better with one another. It is empowering for a parent to have English skills needed to help and parent their children in the home as well as to help them with various school needs.

### **Effect on Children's Performance**

Parents reported that they were taking ESL classes to help their children perform better in school and that they are better able to assist with homework since beginning the classes. The improvements parents related were: (1) improved behavior, (2) improved attendance, and (3) improved relationships with teachers. Improvement in each of these areas attests to the benefit of the parent ESL classes. Parents stressed that because of the English classes, they were now able to help their children with homework, something they could not have done before. Every child made some type of improvement including one child who won the student of the month award. Parents commented on how beneficial it was to assist their children instead of waiting for the aid of a teacher or a neighbor. Parent ESL classes can be valuable for schools that have ELLs who may not otherwise receive much help at home because the classes give parents the tools needed to help their children.

### **Parent-School Interaction**

Assisting children at home is only part of the equation for giving children tools needed for success; parents also need to advocate for their children in schools. This involves understanding the school system and working with school personnel. A parent cannot be an advocate for his/her child without understanding school culture, system and rules. Schools can foster an improved relationship between the parents and the school by providing parent ESL classes and encouraging parents to enter the school. ESL classes can then become a gateway to parents understanding the school system and the culture and becoming more involved. Parents can become partners with educators; these classes

can provide tools for facilitating that process. Working with parents helps students succeed in school. The home environment so crucial for academic success is also strengthened.

Parent ESL classes in the school of their children and other family members improved interactions with school personnel. Eighty percent of participants reported increased interaction with their children's teachers and 7 out of 10 reported increased interaction with school personnel. They attributed the increase to practicing parent teacher dialogs, learning new language, and understanding school expectations. Most of the teachers at school speak English; therefore, it is important to have English skills sufficient to communicate with them. Parents are less likely to speak with a teacher if they do not know what words to use.

Expectations in the U.S. for parental involvement in school differ from those of other cultures. If parents are only exposed to the norms of their native culture, they may behave consistent with those norms in an unfamiliar setting. For example, they may not know that in U.S. American culture parents are expected to advocate for their child. Parent ESL classes can assist parents with acculturation and confidence building by allowing parents of L2 learners to (1) observe L1 English speaking parents and (2) practice vocabulary building interactions within a safe environment. For example, practicing parent-teacher conferences in this ideal environment provides parents with essential skills necessary to become a resource at home for their children. Moving beyond the basic communication (BICS) and onto CALP in the language of the school is essential for parents to maintain the parental role; ESL classes can be a bridge for the home-school relationship and enhance competency as seen by reported increased

interactions. U.S. American cultural expectations dictate that parents must call the school or send a note when a child is sick; this is not the case in all cultures. Participants in this study reported increased interaction in the following ways: (1) on the phone to say that their child will be missing school, (2) in person to take them out of school, and (3) at other times to discuss a child's behavior. Practice in ESL classes in the school environment has given parents heightened confidence to function in their new culture and language.

One of the goals of the ESL course is to help the parents become more involved in the school and their children's educations. The parents are able to communicate at a basic level with teachers and administrators more than they could before as evidenced by reported experiences. One parent now attends weekly meetings; several others express with pride that they know how their children are doing in school academically and behaviorally. All parents have a right to know all aspects of their children's school experiences and to understand teachers who communicate that information.

Increased interactions were reported by all parents, and some after only a few months of ESL classes. Over time, and with additional activities in the curriculum to support parents even more, the parent involvement with the school and support of their children would be expected to increase.

### **Family Involvement**

It is clear from the study that ESL classes should involve more than just the parents if the goal is to support the children. These ESL classes were designed for parents who had children in public school, but other family members attended who sometimes

take on a parental role. One participant in the study was a woman who had two nephews in school. She came to the English classes because her sister was always working. This aunt was responsible for handling family tasks related to school even though she did not live in the same house. She helped the children with homework, was the one who attended meetings, and coordinated family and school efforts. Two other participants were grandparents of children in the school. They were not the primary caregivers for the children in terms of monetary support, but they were able to support the whole family by learning English in order to communicate with the school and teachers and to help the children with their homework. The participants in this study were from Latin American cultures where family is very important and the extended family is heavily involved in supporting and raising the children. It would be beneficial in areas populated by people from extended family-oriented cultures to include additional family members in ESL classes.

### **Deliberate ESL Teacher Strategies**

Participating ESL teachers reported utilizing activities (e.g., mock parent-teacher conferences) to encourage and facilitate interaction between parents and school personnel and the parents reported increased interaction with both teachers and school personnel. Teachers were also asked about using ESL classes to discuss with parents any problems that the children were having in school. One teacher said that she incorporated discussions of this type when a parent broached the subject. Both teachers felt this was something that would be important to parents taking ESL classes.

Since the parents are taking ESL in part to help their children do better in school, the teachers were also asked if they discussed the progress of the children in school during the ESL class. The responses to this question were not as straight-forward as the responses about activities to encourage parent involvement with teachers and the school. One teacher said that she did discuss the progress of the children, but it was usually when a parent brought up the subject. Both teachers felt that they were not sure how to do that in an effective way or when they could do that with the parents. One teacher felt that if she were taught how to do that, she could do it, and was very interested in receiving help learning how to discuss the children's progress. She stated that since most of the parents are there to help their children, it would make sense to be talking more about the children during English classes. The other teacher was not sure if they should take time in a class setting to discuss individual children and individual problems. It seems that parent ESL classes could be more effective by including activities or discussions that would allow parents opportunities to discuss problems they are having with their children in school.

Parent reports indicated on the questionnaire that there were some areas in which ESL classes could be improved. Two of the questions on the parent questionnaire had "yes" and "no" options (see Appendix F). If the participant selected "yes", then they were to go on and answer one question and if they selected "no", then they were to respond to a different question. No parent marked "no" to the question "has your interaction with your child's teacher increased since attending this ESL class," but seven participants did indicate ways they thought the ESL class could help them interact better. The participants indicated that the ESL class could help them more by discussing problems and teaching language that relates to the U.S. school system. When participants were asked if their

interaction with school personnel had increased since beginning ESL classes, only 2 participants marked “no”. Those participants then went on to indicate that the ESL class would be more helpful to them in their interactions by allowing discussion of their children’s in-school problems. Four participants, who did not select “no”, identified ways that the ESL class could help them interact more with school personnel. These participants indicated that the ESL class could help them discuss problems their child might be having in school, set up scenarios to practice talking with school personnel, learn language related to the US school system, and have school personnel come to the ESL class.

### **Limitations**

This study used a small sample size of 10 participants, all Spanish speaking. All results should be interpreted with this information in mind. The participants volunteered to participate in the study and it is possible that they only volunteered because of positive experiences with interactions in the school it is also possible that the reason they were in the class to volunteer was because they had positive experiences. Negative experiences may exist, but were just not represented the way the sampling was done. Also, the study was conducted in a school where many first languages were represented and the school had many programs that had involved the local community for many years.

This study was set up to examine parent perceptions; therefore, the results cannot be interpreted in place of empirical data. Follow-up studies that examine student test scores, teacher perceptions of student improvement, and quantity of parental involvement would need to be completed to know if the parents’ perceptions are the reality;



quantitative data examining the relationship between children's performance in school and their parents attending ESL in their school could give more objective scoring of data necessary to support the results from the parent responses.

### **Future Directions**

From this study, there are three main directions for future research to clarify and expand upon findings from this study:

1. larger studies involving larger populations and more locations
2. longer studies examining results over an extended period of time, and
3. quantifiable studies to verify self-reported data

Studies of larger populations and in more locations as well as different research designs and types of data could help determine if improvements in children performance and parent interactions in the school are because of the ESL teacher, the school they are in, the type of parent who attends ESL classes, educational background of the parents, or whatever other variables may be involved in helping children's improving academic performance and language development, so that those variables could be maximized to help many more children perform better in school. More specifically, in schools where parent ESL classes are offered, is the ESL parental involvement percentage higher than or the same as other schools where these types of programs are not offered? Also, because all of the participants in this study were Spanish speaking, future studies should involve participants from multiple language backgrounds so the results can be generalized to other populations.

Longitudinal case studies are needed to determine how time effects children's improvements and parent involvement. Is the perceived parental involvement and improved behavior from this study a short-term effect? Do they increase, decrease or stay the same over time? A special focus on the role of multiple languages and their use at home and in school settings also needs to be investigated. Does school staff plurilingualism change the interactions for the parents over time?

This study focused on the perceptions of the parents. Future quantifiable studies are needed to determine if the parents' attendance at ESL classes resulted in an improvement children's grades, increased attendance, and parent interaction with school personnel. Also, in cases wherein interactions increased and improved, what kinds of interactions improved with ESL classes and how much interaction is needed to effect improvement in the children? Does longer parent participation in ESL classes lead to higher children performance and greater parent involvement, or is there merely an initial boost? Quantifiable data comparing parent involvement in ESL classes and student improvement in school (e.g., test scores, grades, etc.) are needed to see if there is a link between the two. Future studies should examine whether the children not only improve as a result of their parents attending ESL classes in their children's school and gaining the skills necessary to help their children succeed in school, but also if they improve over children whose parents are not involved in this type of class or gain these types of skills. Studies of the kind proposed will show what types of improvement children have as a result of parent ESL classes, how much they improve, and ways of helping other students from similar backgrounds have similar improvement.

## APPENDIX A

### PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE - ENGLISH

Name \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been taking ESL classes? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is your teacher? \_\_\_\_\_

Where are you from? \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why are you taking this class? (circle all that apply)
  - a. Improve English skills
  - b. get a better job
  - c. help my child in school
  - d. get to know other parents in my child's school
  - e. other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. This class has helped me \_\_\_\_\_ (Circle all that apply)
  - a. Help my children at home with homework
  - b. In the workplace
  - c. Know how to interact at my child's school with teachers and other staff
  - d. Understand the school system in the US
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. Since I have been attending ESL classes in my child's school, I have seen improvements in my child in the following areas: (circle all that apply)
  - a. My child's grades have improved
  - b. My child's behavior at school has improved
  - c. My child's attendance has improved
  - d. My child's relationship with his teacher has improved
  - e. I have not see any improvement for my child in school
  - f. Other \_\_\_\_\_
4. This year I have interacted with my child's teacher (circle all that apply)
  - a. On the phone
  - b. At parent teacher conference
  - c. Another time to discuss my child's performance
  - d. I have not interacted with my child's teacher
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_
5. Has your interaction with your child's teacher increased since attending this ESL class? (choose one)
  - a. Yes (if yes, answer #6)
  - b. No (if no, answer #7)
6. If yes to #5, how has this course helped you to do that better? (circle all that apply)
  - a. By practicing dialogs between parent and teacher
  - b. By learning language to describe what I wanted to discuss
  - c. By understanding what is expected of me as the parent in a US public school
  - d. Other \_\_\_\_\_
7. If no to #5, how could this class help you interact better with your child's teacher? (circle all that apply)
  - a. Discussing problems I am having with my child's teacher
  - b. Set up scenarios to practice talking with my child's teacher
  - c. Learn language that relates to the school system here in the US
  - d. Other \_\_\_\_\_

8. This year I have interacted with the school personnel in my child's school (circle all that apply)
- a. By phone to say that my child will be missing school
  - b. In person to take them out of school
  - c. In person to check them out of school
  - d. Another time to discuss my child's behavior
  - e. I have not interacted with any school personnel
  - f. Other \_\_\_\_\_
9. Has your interaction with your child's school personnel increased since attending this ESL class? (choose one)
- a. Yes (if yes, answer #10)
  - b. No (if no, answer #11)
10. If yes to #9, how has this course helped you to do that better? (circle all that apply)
- a. By practicing dialogs for things like calling the school when my child is sick
  - b. By learning language to describe what I wanted to discuss
  - c. By understanding what is expected of me as the parent in a US public school
  - d. Other \_\_\_\_\_
11. If no to #9, how could this class help you interact better with the school personnel? (circle all that apply)
- a. Discussing problems I am having with my child in school
  - b. Set up scenarios to practice talking with school personnel
  - c. Learn language that relates to the school system here in the US
  - d. Have school personnel come to the ESL class
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX B**

### **PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE - SPANISH**

Nombre\_\_\_\_\_

¿Por cuánto tiempo ha tomado clases de inglés?

¿Quién es su profesora?

¿De dónde es Ud.?

1. ¿Por qué está Ud. tomando esta clase? (Marque todo que aplica)
  - a. Mejorar mi inglés
  - b. Alcanzar trabajo mejor
  - c. Ayudar mi hijo(a) en la escuela
  - d. Conocer otros padres en la escuela de mis niños
  - e. Otro\_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Ésta clase me ha ayudado\_\_\_\_\_ (Marque todo que aplica)
  - a. a ayudar mis hijos con su tarea en la casa
  - b. en el trabajo
  - c. Saber cómo relacionarme con las maestras y otro personal en la escuela de mi hijo(a)
  - d. Entender como son las escuelas en los Estados Unidos
  - e. Otro\_\_\_\_\_

3. Desde que empecé asistiendo clases de inglés en la escuela de mi hijo(a), he anotado mejoras (avances) en las siguientes áreas.
  - a. Las marcas de mi hijo(a) han mejorado
  - b. El comportamiento de mi hijo(a) en la escuela ha mejorado
  - c. La asistencia de mi hijo(a) ha mejorado
  - d. Mis comunicaciones con la maestra de mi hijo(a) ha mejorado
  - e. No he visto ningún mejora por mi hijo(a) en la escuela
  - f. Otro\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Éste año, he comunicado con la maestra de mi hijo(a) (Marque todo que aplica)
  - a. Por teléfono
  - b. Durante las juntas de padres y maestros (Parent teacher conferences)
  - c. Otro tiempo para hablar del comportamiento de me hijo(a)
  - d. No he comunicado con la maestra de mi hijo(a)
  - e. Otro \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Sus comunicaciones con la maestra de su hijo(a) ¿han aumentado desde empezar este clase de inglés? (marque uno)
  - a. Sí (si marcó sí, favor de seguir con No. 6)
  - b. No (si marcó no, favor de pasar a No.7)
  
6. Si contestó Sí a No. 5, ¿Cómo le ha ayudado esta clase comunicarse?
  - a. Por practicar diálogos entre padres y maestros
  - b. Por aprender las palabras que describen lo que quiero platicar
  - c. Por comprender que se requiere de mi como padre en una escuela en los Estados Unidos
  - d. Otro\_\_\_\_\_
  
7. Si contestó no a No. 5, ¿Cómo le ayudaría esta clase a comunicarse mejor con la maestra de su hijo(a)?
  - a. Platicar con la maestra de mi hijo(a) acerca de problemas que tengo
  - b. Establecer situaciones hipotéticas para practicar hablando con personal de la escuela
  - c. Aprender palabras que se relacionen con las escuelas en los Estados Unidos
  - d. Otro\_\_\_\_\_

8. Durante este año, he comunicado con personal de la escuela de mi hijo (Marque todo que aplica)
- a. Por teléfono para decir que mi hijo(a) no estará presente
  - b. De frente para sacar mi hijo(a) de la escuela
  - c. De frente para sacar mi hijo(a) de clases temporariamente
  - d. Otro tiempo para hablar del comportamiento de mi hijo(a)
  - e. No he comunicado con personal de la escuela de mi hijo(a)
  - f. Otro\_\_\_\_\_
9. Ha tenido Ud. más comunicación con el personal de la escuela de su hijo(a) desde que empezó este clase de inglés.
- a. Sí (si marcó sí, favor de seguir con No. 10)
  - b. No (si marcó no, favor de pasar a No.11)
10. Si contestó Sí a No.9 ¿Cómo le ha ayudado este clase con esto? (Marque todo que aplica)
- a. Por practicar diálogos como para llamar la escuela de mi hijo(a) para decir que está enfermo
  - b. Por aprender las palabras que describen lo que quiero platicar
  - c. Por comprender que se requiere de mi como padre en una escuela en los Estados Unidos
  - d. Otro\_\_\_\_\_
11. Si contestó no a No. 9, ¿Cómo podría este clase ayudarle comunicar mejor con personal de la escuela?
- a. Platicar de problemas que tengo con la escuela de mi hijo(a)
  - b. Establecer situaciones hipotéticas para practicar hablando con personal de la escuela
  - c. Aprender palabras que se relacionen con las escuelas en los Estados Unidos
  - d. Que personal de la escuela visiten la clase de inglés
  - e. Otro\_\_\_\_\_



## **APPENDIX C**

### **PARENT FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS - ENGLISH**

1. Tell me how the ESL course has helped you to help your child in school. And in what ways is your child doing better in school since you have been taking ESL classes.
2. Are there ways that you think this class could help you to help your child more with school?
3. Tell me how this ESL course has increased your interactions in the school.
4. Are there ways that you want to become involved in the school but you have not been sure how to become involved with them?
5. Are there ways in which this class could help you become more involved in the school?
6. Is there anything else you want to say about your experiences that I have not asked you?

## **APPENDIX D**

### **PARENT FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS – SPANISH**

1. Explíqueme ¿cómo le ha ayudado las clases de inglés como segundo idioma para ayudar su hijo en sus estudios? ¿Cómo ha mejorado su hijo(a) en la escuela desde que empezó las clases?
2. ¿Hay maneras que Ud. piensa que esta clase le ayudara a ayudar su hijo(a) más en sus estudios?
3. ¿Dígame cómo este clase de inglés le ha ayudado a aumentar sus interacciones con la escuela?
4. ¿Hay maneras en que Ud. quisiera involucrarse más en la escuela, pero no sabía cómo?
5. ¿Hay maneras en que ésta clase le podría ayudar a involucrarse más en la escuela?
6. ¿Hay algo más que Ud. quisiera decir sobre sus experiencias que no le he preguntado?

## **APPENDIX E**

### **TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. Do you incorporate activities into the ESL curriculum that provide your students the opportunity to practice interactions with school personnel (teachers, staff, etc)?
  - a. Yes (if yes, answer #2)
  - b. No (if no, answer #3)
2. If yes for #1, what kinds of activities do you do with them?
3. If no for #1, have you considered such activities, or do they not meet the needs that the students have had in the classroom, or are you unable to do this for a different reason?
4. Do you discuss with your students their children's progress in school and how they as parents can help their children in school?
  - a. Yes (if yes, answer #5)
  - b. No (if no, answer #6)
5. If yes for #4, what kind of help have your students requested and how do you incorporate these needs into the classroom?
6. If no for #4, would the students resist discussing their children's progress in school and how to help their children in school, or what other concerns might make a discussion of this type problematic?

## APPENDIX F

### PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

#### Parent Question #1

Question	<b>Why are you taking this class? (circle all that apply)</b>				
Selections	Improve English skills	Get a better job	Help my child in school	Get to know other parents in the school	Other
Participants (number)	A,B,C,D,F,H,I (7)	B,F,H,I,J (5)	A,C,D,E,G,H,J (7)	E,H (2)	E -communicate in society F- integrate and know more (2)

#### Parent Question #2

Question	<b>This class has helped me _____ (Circle all that apply)</b>			
Selections	Help my children at home with homework	In the workplace	Know how to interact at my child's school with teachers and other staff	Understand the school system in the US
Participants (number)	A,C,D,E,F,G,H,I (8)	I,J (2)	C,D,E (3)	D,E,F,I (4)

## Parent Question #3

Question	<b>Since I have been attending ESL classes in my child's school, I have seen improvements in my child in the following areas: (circle all that apply)</b>				
Selections	My child's grades have improved	My child's behavior at school has improved	My child's attendance has improved	My child's relationship with his teacher has improved	I have not seen any improvement
Participants (number)	A,D,G,J (4)	B,C,D,G (4)	D,H,J (3)	D,E,F,I (4)	(0)

## Parent Question #4

Question	<b>This year I have interacted with my child's teacher (circle all that apply)</b>			
Selections	On the phone	At parent teacher conference	Another time to discuss my child's performance	I have not interacted with my child's teacher
Participants (number)	D (1)	B,C,D,E,F,G,H (7)	A,D,H,J (4)	(0)

## Parent Question #5

Question	<b>Has your interaction with your child's teacher increased since attending this ESL class? (choose one)</b>	
Selections	YES	NO
Participants (number)	A,B,C,D,E,G,I,J (8)	(0)

## Parent Question #6

Question	<b>If yes to #5, how has this course helped you to do that better? (circle all that apply)</b>		
Selections	By practicing dialogs between parent and teacher	By learning language to describe things I want to discuss	By understanding what is expected of me as the parent in a US public school
Participants (number)	D,E,G,I (4)	A,B,C,D,E,I (6)	D,E,I (3)

## Parent Question #7

Question	<b>If no to #5, how could this class help you interact better with your child's teacher? (circle all that apply)</b>		
Selections	Discussing problems I am having with my child's teacher	Set up scenarios to practice talking with my child's teacher	Learn language that relates to the school system here in the US
Participants (number)	A,B,C (3)	(0)	B,F,H,I,J (5)

\*no parents answered no to question #5, but a number of them selected options on this question anyway.

## Parent Question #8

Question	<b>This year I have interacted with the school personnel in my child's school (circle all that apply)</b>			
Selections	By phone to say that my child will be missing school	In person to take them out of school	Another time to discuss my child's behavior	I have not interacted with school personnel
Participants (number)	A,B,D,F,G,J (6)	H (1)	B,C,E (3)	E (1)

## Parent Question #9

Question	<b>Has your interaction with your child's school personnel increased since attending this ESL class? (choose one)</b>	
Selections	YES	NO
Participants (number)	A,D,E,F,G,I,J (7)	B,C (2)

## Parent Question #10

Question	<b>If yes to #9, how has this course helped you to do that better? (circle all that apply)</b>		
Selections	By practicing dialogs for things like calling the school when my child is sick	By learning language to describe what I wanted to discuss	By understanding what is expected of me as the parent in a US public school
Participants (number)	A,D,I,J (4)	E,F,I,J (4)	E,F (2)

## Parent Question #11

Question	<b>If no to #9, how could this class help you interact better with the school personnel? (circle all that apply)</b>			
Selections	Discussing problems I am having with my child in school	Set up scenarios to practice talking with school personnel	Learn language that relates to the school system here in the US	Have school personnel come to the ESL class
Participants (number)	A,B,C,J (4)	I,J (2)	H,I (2)	H (1)

\*Only two of the people who answered with the first choice actually answered no to question #9

## **APPENDIX G**

### **PARENT FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW RESPONSES**

#### **Follow-up Interview Participant A**

This participant has three boys

1. Tell me how the ESL course has helped you to help your child in school. And in what ways is your child doing better in school since you have been taking ESL classes.

It is helping me a lot to check their homework also the participant is an example because she is studying and setting an example for the children.

Learning English does not interest her for herself, but it is helping her to have a stronger relationship with her children on an academic level because she can check their homework and help with their studies.

She thinks because of the ability to help with the homework, one of her children won the student of the month award.

2. Are there ways that you think this class could help you to help your child more with school?

3. Tell me how this ESL course has increased your interactions in the school.

She is able to talk to the teachers more because her children's teacher does not speak Spanish. She can communicate on a basic level.

Now she can enter the school and feels confident to come and check on her students.

Able to talk to the teacher and ask basic questions 'how are my sons doing?' the teachers do not speak Spanish.

4. Are there ways that you want to become involved in the school but you have not been sure how to become involved with them? She first lived in Minnesota and did not speak English and did not have any interaction, but now feels more confident to come in to the school and know what is happening there.

Learning English has helped her feel more comfortable and confident in the school.



5. Are there ways in which this class could help you become more involved in the school?

No everything is great, the little English that I have learned is sufficient.

6. Is there anything else you want to say about your experiences that I have not asked you?

At home she can understand what her kids are saying between them and understood that one was saying inappropriate things.

Correct them – empowers her to be the parent. They like Spanish, and they speak Spanish, but they prefer English. In the house we speak English. They do not speak Spanish perfectly. And study it on Saturdays.

### **Follow-up Interview Participant C**

1. Tell me how the ESL course has helped you to help your child in school. And in what ways is your child doing better in school since you have been taking ESL classes.

5 year old first year of school.

Everything that the student gets is in Spanish, and he goes to a bilingual school, so she does not and could not help in English anyway.

Only just begun my studies, so it is hard to answer that. She understands some things, but others not.

2. Are there ways that you think this class could help you to help your child more with school?

I am sure further on after my studies I think so. She feels confident after he English is better that she will be able to help her son out more.

3. Tell me how this ESL course has increased your interactions in the school.

I do not need to speak to the director and the teacher speaks Spanish. If I have a problem I just speak to the teacher.

4. Are there ways that you want to become involved in the school but you have not been sure how to become involved with them?

Been to the family nights and parent teacher, but there is always someone translating. She is fine with that. If she needs to call in there is always a person who speaks Spanish.

5. Are there ways in which this class could help you become more involved in the school?

6. Is there anything else you want to say about your experiences that I have not asked you?

### Follow-up Interview Participant E

1. Tell me how the ESL course has helped you to help your child in school. And in what ways is your child doing better in school since you have been taking ESL classes.  
3 kids in school.  
My kids speak in English all the time. Both of them as well as my husband. She doesn't understand what they say, so she has to learn English to know what they are saying and if it is not appropriate. Before I could not help them with their homework, I had to ask a neighbor or someone else, but now I can help them. Their school performance has improved because she can help them with homework. tell them if it is right or not.
2. Are there ways that you think this class could help you to help your child more with school?  
Yes, I think so, the teacher speaks Spanish and I can ask for help more. The kindergartner is learning words she doesn't know and it is helping. I learn with him and study together.
3. Tell me how this ESL course has increased your interactions in the school.  
Yes because now I can talk to the teacher who only speaks English and the teacher can tell me if he is bad or sad. Before she would send a note, but now she can communicate face to face with the teacher. Administration all speaks Spanish. Minimal communication
4. Are there ways that you want to become involved in the school but you have not been sure how to become involved with them?  
My level is still minimal
5. Are there ways in which this class could help you become more involved in the school?
6. Is there anything else you want to say about your experiences that I have not asked you?  
Nothing more, but I have learned a lot here.

### Follow-up Interview Participant F

1. Tell me how the ESL course has helped you to help your child in school. And in what ways is your child doing better in school since you have been taking ESL classes.

- 3 grandchildren. It has helped because if they have a question about homework I can help them. It is great that he can help them in the moment instead of waiting until the next day to ask the teacher. This has helped personally in work.
2. Are there ways that you think this class could help you to help your child more with school?  
I don't have a lot of time because I work so much, but it has helped when he can go in his busy life.  
Helped his child be more disciplined in the house and improved communication overall.
  3. Tell me how this ESL course has increased your interactions in the school.  
Yes it has helped. Goes to a meeting every week between the family and the school.
  4. Are there ways that you want to become involved in the school but you have not been sure how to become involved with them?  
It has helped him to help his community more because it is a bridge when you can speak both languages.
  5. Are there ways in which this class could help you become more involved in the school?
  6. Is there anything else you want to say about your experiences that I have not asked you?  
Really thankful for the help and would not be able to pay for a class to learn English. Learning English is an investment.

### **Follow-up Interview Participant I**

1. Tell me how the ESL course has helped you to help your child in school. And in what ways is your child doing better in school since you have been taking ESL classes.  
Grandchildren – They (the kids) have helped me. We get together and study together and they teach me and correct me, but it is lots of practice with them. I am able to help them with their homework, but it is great practice for me.  
Grandchildren are really good students and they are teaching her. Yes, she does think that their performance has improved because of her participation in the class. They ask questions. They are dedicated.
1. Are there ways that you think this class could help you to help your child more with school?  
Well, I have learned a lot from this class, so I am able to help them with what I have learned.
2. Tell me how this ESL course has increased your interactions in the school.

Never really around because I work so much. She likes the people at the school and feels there is a good relationship. She is able to understand what they say to her because she can speak the language whether it is about grandchildren or school business. The other day they called her to let her know that the child was sick and she was able to understand.

3. Are there ways that you want to become involved in the school but you have not been sure how to become involved with them?

I would like to be more involved if I had more time because I would learn more.

4. Are there ways in which this class could help you become more involved in the school?

5. Is there anything else you want to say about your experiences that I have not asked you?

Grateful for the time and support because it is really hard to learn languages and I appreciate the time that they dedicate to helping.

### **Follow-up Interview Participant J**

1. Tell me how the ESL course has helped you to help your child in school. And in what ways is your child doing better in school since you have been taking ESL classes.

2 nephews. 8 and 5 It has helped me to help them with their homework. Also helps me understand if they are doing tricks or bad things. Sisters kids but she goes there every day to help them.

2. Are there ways that you think this class could help you to help your child more with school?

Able to help with homework sister does not speak English, can take that role.

3. Tell me how this ESL course has increased your interactions in the school.

Communicate more with the teachers. The little bit I understand helps, but I do not understand a lot.

4. Are there ways that you want to become involved in the school but you have not been sure how to become involved with them?

I'd like to volunteer more when my English gets better.

5. Are there ways in which this class could help you become more involved in the school?

6. Is there anything else you want to say about your experiences that I have not asked you?

It has been great and it has helped a lot.

## **APPENDIX H**

### **TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES**

#### **Teacher Questionnaire Teacher A**

1. Do you incorporate activities into the ESL curriculum that provide your students the opportunity to practice interactions with school personnel (teachers, staff, etc)?

Yes, I do incorporate activities into the ESL curriculum that provide the students the opportunity to practice interactions with school personnel.

2. If yes for #1, what kinds of activities do you do with them?

We practice parent teacher conferences as well as stories and dialogues that deal with themes like what to do if your child is sick and what to do about bullying.

3. If no for #1, have you considered such activities, or do they not meet the needs that the students have had in the classroom, or are you unable to do this for a different reason?

No response

4. Do you discuss with your students their children's progress in school and how they as parents can help their children in school?

Yes, I do discuss with my students their children's progress in school and how they as parents can help their children in school.

5. If yes for #4, what kind of help have your students requested and how do you incorporate these needs into the classroom?

We don't do this (#4) often, but we have reviewed vocabulary about school subjects and how to talk to their teachers about any issues.

6. If no for #4, would the students resist discussing their children's progress in school and how to help their children in school, or what other concerns might make a discussion of this type problematic?

No response

### Teacher Questionnaire Teacher B

1. Do you incorporate activities into the ESL curriculum that provide your students the opportunity to practice interactions with school personnel (teachers, staff, etc)?

I sometimes incorporate activities into the ESL curriculum that provide my students the opportunity to practice interactions with school personnel.

2. If yes for #1, what kinds of activities do you do with them?

I would like to do these kinds of activities more often! WE talk about teachers and children in our family unit and school unit.

3. If no for #1, have you considered such activities, or do they not meet the needs that the students have had in the classroom, or are you unable to do this for a different reason?

No response

4. Do you discuss with your students their children's progress in school and how they as parents can help their children in school?

I do not often discuss with my students their children's progress in school and how they as parents can help their children in school.

5. If yes for #4, what kind of help have your students requested and how do you incorporate these needs into the classroom?

No Response

6. If no for #4, would the students resist discussing their children's progress in school and how to help their children in school, or what other concerns might make a discussion of this type problematic?

No, I do not think they would resist it, but it's difficult to talk about individual students in a classroom setting. In our school unit we talk about grades and what they mean. If you have any lessons about helping students with homework which would be great since I know children are a big reason they learn English.

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